DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 436 046 EC 307 509

AUTHOR	Temelini, David; Fesko, Sheila
TITLE	Disability Organization's Perspectives on the Needs of Youth with Disabilities Who Are Runaway or Homeless.
INSTITUTION	Children's Hospital, Boston, MA. Inst. for Community Inclusion.
SPONS AGENCY	Administration on Developmental Disabilities (DHHS), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1998-04-00
NOTE	4p.
CONTRACT	90DJ0111
AVAILABLE FROM	Institute for Community Inclusion (UAP), Research and Training Center on Promoting Employment, Children's Hospital, 300 Longwood Ave., Boston, MA 02115. Web site: <http://www.childrenshospital.org/ici>.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Reports - Research (143)
JOURNAL CIT	Research to Practice; v4 n2 Apr 1998
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adolescents; Agencies; *Agency Cooperation; At Risk Persons; *Disabilities; Disadvantaged Youth; *Homeless People; National Surveys; Needs Assessment; *Organizations (Groups); *Policy Formation; Research and Development; *Runaways; Theory Practice Relationship

ABSTRACT

This study surveyed 202 state-level disability organizations concerning their capacity, policy, and practices for working with youth with disabilities who are homeless, runaway, or at risk for running away. Major findings indicated: (1) limited awareness existed of the relationship between disabilities and runaway and homeless youth; (2) only 26 percent of respondents had developed programs or policies to address this issue; (3) although respondents identified these issues as a major need area, they reported limited training in the area of youth at risk for becoming runaway or homeless; (4) despite a strong presence of adolescent individuals with disabilities in emergency service provider caseloads, relationships between these agencies and state-level disability organizations are limited. Findings suggest the need for disability organizations and adolescent emergency service providers to build relationships and for state policies to address the identification of youth at risk for running away or becoming homeless and provide a support structure to meet their needs. (DB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 436 046

INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY INCLUSION

RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

VOLUME 4, NUMBER 2
APRIL 1998

DISABILITY ORGANIZATION'S PERSPECTIVES ON THE NEEDS OF YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE RUNAWAY OR HOMELESS

By

DAVID TEMELINI &
SHEILA FESKO

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

EC 307509

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ICI
INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY INCLUSION

Research to Practice

April 1998
Volume 4, Number 2

Disability Organization's Perspectives on the Needs of Youth with Disabilities who are Runaway or Homeless

by David Temelini and Sheila Fesko

Introduction

Youth who are homeless, runaway, or at risk for running away who also have a disability are often not effectively served because of complex learning and emotional needs. An original study of Family Youth and Service Bureau (FYSB) funded agencies that provide adolescent emergency shelter services and basic center services was recently completed by The Institute for Community Inclusion (UAP), in collaboration with Bridge Over Troubled Waters, Inc. Ninety-six percent of survey respondents indicated they are serving youth with both identified and suspected disabilities, and that these youth represent a substantial portion of agency caseloads (*Temelini & Fesko, 1997*).

This brief describes a parallel survey of state-level disability organizations that provide resources such as training and technical assistance, information and referral, and advocacy for individuals with disabilities. An important goal of this project is to identify existing capacity and promising practices of these organizations, and to use this information to improve the response to the growing needs of this population.

Participants

Three hundred and ninety six state-level disability organizations that provide support and resources to individuals with disabilities were surveyed, including the following: University Affiliated Programs, Developmental Disabilities Councils, Protection and Advocacy agencies, State LEA School-to-Work and Transition grant recipients, and Child/Adolescent Services Programs within State Departments of Mental Health and Mental Retardation. A total of 202 organizations responded to the survey.

Findings

Awareness/Concern

There is limited awareness of the relationship between disabilities and runaway and homeless youth.

- Forty-two percent of the respondents were either "unaware" or only "vaguely aware" of issues concerning this population of youth.
- Level of concern regarding this issue did not differ by community in which services were provided (urban, suburban, rural), indicating this is not an urban issue alone. It affects youth in all communities.
- Twenty-two percent of respondents were "very much aware" of issues and had become aware through direct service, medical treatment, community needs assessments, media sources, and interactions with both the courts and school systems.
- Only 12% of respondents viewed this issue as a "substantial concern" for the constituency they serve.
- Respondents from Departments of Mental Health have been more involved with this issue than other agencies. Fifty-six percent of respondents from those agencies said they were "very much aware" of this issue and 28% said it was a "substantial concern" for their constituency.

Programs and Policy

Twenty-six percent of respondents indicated that they have developed programs or policies to address this issue. Examples included:

- crisis response teams to ensure that youth are not discharged to shelters
- study of the reasons youth run away from congregate mental health settings
- incorporation of issues into state plan
- policy recommendations to state housing authority
- homeless youth are considered a priority
- wraparound shelter care for individuals with developmental disabilities

Reasons given for implementing such programs included: concerns about the high number of runaway and hurt children in the community; concern about youth shuffled from placements or unstable living situations; local schools needing assistance in serving homeless youth; changes in laws and the award of a grant to serve the population.

EC 307509

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Although respondents identified this as a major need area, there has been limited participation in training concerning youth at risk for becoming runaway or homeless

- Eighteen percent of respondents have received training on addressing the needs of youth with disabilities who are homeless, runaways or at risk for being homeless.
- While the majority have not received training, 73% felt this training would be useful for their staff, particularly in the areas of identification of resources for youth and families, and in identification of risk behaviors.

Despite a strong presence of individuals with disabilities in adolescent emergency service provider caseloads, relationships between these agencies and state-level disability organizations are limited

- Sixty-seven percent of respondents indicated that they were aware of the adolescent emergency service provider in their community.
- Of those organizations who were aware of the adolescent emergency service provider, only 34% had a working relationship with this provider.
- Departments of Mental Health were most likely to have a working relationship with the adolescent emergency service provider, with 64% having this contact.
- Fifty percent of respondents indicated that they have had services or resources that may be useful to adolescent emergency service provider.
- Only 46% of respondents indicated an interest in having their agency identified as a resource to adolescent emergency service providers in their state.

Implications

While the FYSB funded adolescent emergency service provider system is aware of the presence of youth with disabilities and is providing services to these youth, this issue has not been widely identified or recognized as an issue by survey repondents from state-level disability organizations. The nature of youth who are runaway or homeless and their life experiences have resulted in their not connecting with formal support systems. As a result this population has not been identified within disability services. To respond to the needs of these youth it will be incumbent on state-level disability organizations to reach out and support these youth in services where they are connected, such as adolescent emergency service providers. Without such ongoing collaboration, youth who are runaway or homeless will continue to be lost in the system as adolescent emergency service providers continue to struggle with how best to respond to their complex needs.

Some suggestions:

- Disability organizations and adolescent emergency service providers should build relationships and use the resources each has to offer in meeting this need.
- State policies should address the identification of youth at risk for running away or becoming homeless and provide a support structure that can respond to their needs.

This survey examined state-level disability organizations that primarily support youth with developmental disabilities. There may be differences in this population and those served by adolescent emergency service providers. The FYSB adolescent emergency service providers are also seeing youth with emotional disabilities and learning disabilities and organizations that support youth with these disabilities will also need to become more aware of and active in this process.

Reference

Temelini, D. & Fesko, S.L. (1997, January) *Research to Practice: Responding to the Needs of Youth with Disabilities Who are Runaway or Homeless.* Boston: Institute for Community Inclusion (UAP), Children's Hospital.

Acknowledgements

This brief reflects the contributions of staff at the Institute for Community Inclusion and Bridge Over Troubled Waters, Inc., in particular **Cecilia Gandolfo** and **Kathy Manganaro** as well as the responding organizations.

www.childrenshospital.org/ici

This project is funded by grant #90DJ0111 from the Administration on Developmental Disabilities and the Family and Youth Services Bureau. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and no official endorsement should be inferred. This project is a collaborative effort of the Institute for Community Inclusion (UAP) and Bridge Over Troubled Waters. For further information on this study, please contact: Sheila Fesko, Institute for Community Inclusion, 300 Longwood Avenue, Boston, MA 02115 (617) 355-6271; (617) 355-6956 TTY; ici@a1.tch.harvard.edu

BEST COPY AVAILABLE